The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) in 2008-2009: What it has achieved, and what are its best options for the future?

Now over ten years old, the CSES is a systematic cross-national study of comparative electoral behavior. Theoretically informed, the project is transforming the study of comparative politics; it has rapidly become accepted as one of the principal resources for scholars investigating cross-national public-opinion and political behavior research. Now involving the collaboration of more than 200 scholars, CSES advances the understanding of enduring and fundamental questions about electoral choice in ways not possible through the secondary analysis of previously-existing data.

The goals of this unique research program are threefold:

- to illuminate how societal, political, and economic institutional and structural contexts, most especially electoral institutions, shape the beliefs and behaviors of citizens, thereby conditioning the nature and quality of democratic choice as expressed through popular elections;
- to understand the nature of political and social cleavages and alignments; and
- to shed light on how citizens, living under diverse political arrangements, evaluate democratic institutions and processes.

The CSES is based on the premise that socio-political-economic contexts, and especially the institutional arrangements governing the conduct of elections, affect the nature and quality of democratic choice. The power of the CSES study design rests in the combination of repeated survey-data collection in member countries with contextual data relating to electoral-institutional arrangements and other social, political-, and economic-contextual conditions. This design, combining micro and macro data collection, facilitates theoretical, methodological, and substantive advances in the understanding of how contextual variations in, for example, electoral-institutional arrangements govern the conduct of elections and affect the nature and quality of democratic choice.

With two modules completed and a third in the field at the end of 2008, a fourth module of questions must be developed over the next two years. This paper has been written by a Task Force set up by the Module 3 Planning Committee in order to stimulate debate about the content of the next module. CSES collaborators and the CSES user community were asked to submit brief proposals for the Task Force to incorporate in this paper. Several were received and are summarized below. Members of the Task Force are: Jack Vowles (Chair), Andre Blais, Kees Aarts, Gabor Toka, and Radoslaw Markowski. The Task Force gratefully acknowledges permission to use text on the history of the CSES and some parts of the publications summary derived from an earlier document written by Ian McAllister and Nancy Burns.

First, this paper summarises the development of the CSES over Modules 1 to 3, moves on to review publications using the CSES to date, and concludes with a summary of various proposals received for future development of the CSES

CSES Module 1 (1996-2001) and Module 2 (2001-2006).

A conference to explore the viability of a Comparative Study of Electoral Systems project was organized in 1994 by ICORE (International Committee for Research into Elections and Representative Democracy). ICORE was led in this endeavor by a steering committee of John Curtice (University of Strathclyde), Hans-Dieter Klingemann (*Wissenschaftszentrum-Berlin für Sozialforschung*), Steven Rosenstone (University of Michigan), and Jacques Thomassen (University of Twente), then ICORE's Chair. As a result of this initial meeting, an enlarged steering committee was formed to implement the ideas from the conference. In its final report, the committee specified the basic design for Module 1:

> The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems focuses on the nature of electoral choice in democratic polities (consolidated democracies, those undergoing democratic transitions, and those recovering from democratic breakdown). Beginning in 1996, collaborators will include in their national election studies a module of common questionnaire content. The module contains 16 questions (running about 10 minutes in length) and will be asked in its entirety in a post-election survey. Collaborators will also provide macro-level data as well as data on the background (demographic) characteristics of respondents, coded to agreed upon standards. Collaborators shall aspire to a set of scientific standards concerning sample quality, study administration, and data quality.

To ensure the gathering of comparable data on electoral institutions and party systems, a committee under the leadership of Gary Cox designed a detailed, self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire covered *inter alia* features of the electoral system, rules for cabinet formation, federal and other arrangements for the geographic decentralization of power, and the relative power of executive and legislative branches. The questionnaire was designed to be completed either by the CSES investigator from each country, or by another expert. The questionnaire was added to at Module 2 and again at Module 3 to collect additional contextual information relevant to the theme of the new modules.2

The first round of CSES data collection (Module 1), completed in 2001, focused on three themes relating to *system performance*. The first examined the impact of constitutional and electoral systems on democratic performance (e.g. Lijphart 1984, 1999; Powell 1982; Taagepera and Shugart 1989; Lijphart and Grofman 1984; Shugart and Carey 1992; Powell 2000; Cox 2002; Persson and Tabellini 2003; Franklin 2004). Second, instrumentation on social cleavages was included – comparable measures of occupation, social status, and religious affiliation, among others – in order to enter into ongoing debates about the social underpinnings of party systems (e.g., Franklin et al. 1992; Clarke et al. 1993; Hout et al. 1995; Brooks and Manza 1997; Evans 1999; Dalton 2006). And third, the module examined attitudes toward parties, political institutions, and the democratic process more generally. Decline in political support is widely documented across the advanced industrial democracies (Nye et al. 1997; Norris 1999; Pharr and Putnam 2000; Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002; Dalton 2004).

All in all, 33 countries included CSES Module 1 in one or more of their national election studies. Since its release in mid 2002, Module 1 has been downloaded over 7,500 times from the CSES website, the Central Archive, and ICPSR. The project's collaborators in Spain have been providing since October 2005, via in-kind contribution, a web-based utility for analyzing CSES Module 1 that has been averaging 1,500 page requests per month.

Module 2 included new instrumentation designed to address three major theoretical questions relating to *accountability and representation*. The first pertains to the logic of elections, and whether and how elections are acting as a mechanism to hold governments accountable or a means to ensure that citizens' views are properly represented in the democratic process (e.g., Wessels 1999; Powell 2000). The second question relates to participation in politics. Cross-national evidence points to decreasing turnout and campaign activity in almost all advanced industrial democracies (Putnam 2000; Dalton and Wattenberg 2000; Wattenberg 2002; Blais 2000; Blais and Dobrzynska 1998; Franklin 2004), while emerging democracies face the related challenge of engaging their new citizens in the electoral process. Third, thanks to the expanded diversity of its broader coverage, the module advances knowledge of the relationship between electoral-institutional and socio-political-economic context on one side and public opinion, voter choice and behavior on the other in new democracies (e.g., Tóka 2002; Vowles 2008).

Data collection for CSES Module 2 was completed in 2006, with the module having been included in one or more election studies in a total of 38 countries. By February 2008, Module 2 had been downloaded over 3,000 times already.

CSES Module 3 (2006-2011): Political Choices. Module 3 focuses on *voters' perceptions of, assessments of, and responses to the variety and quality of political choices in an election*. This module addresses important policy questions about electoral system design. For established democracies, Module 3 asks how popular satisfaction with politics varies with the political choices offered to voters, and how and why new parties are formed and attract electoral support when the choices on offer are viewed as inadequate. For newly democratizing countries, this module helps us think about electoral system design, and about identifying the system that will best suit the requirements of the country's voters and provide long-term political stability in governance. Drawing on Dahl's (1971) distinction between inclusiveness and contestation, this module asks to what degree political systems provide contestation between meaningful alternatives and how integrative is the structure of electoral competition. The module makes voters' understandings of the set of electoral choices they face a central concern.

Module 3 considers several aspects of voter perceptions of the choices they are offered. The first involves retrospective evaluations of candidates and parties. Scholars have argued that voters evaluate future policies, governments, and parties through their experience of the past (Key 1966; Fiorina 1977; Hibbs 1987, ch. 5; Powell and Whitten 1993). Retrospective policy-evaluations of candidates and parties are perhaps easier for voters to arrive at in systems with concentrated governing authority than they are in the

cases of parties or candidates from coalition and/or minority governments and, even more so, of opposition parties or candidates. Little is known about voters' evaluations of parties and candidates in settings without concentrated governing authority. Thus, the module incorporates questions addressing retrospective evaluations of parties and candidates.

Second, the module incorporates ideology, party image, and policy differences between parties as bases for prospective evaluations. Ultimately, ideological differences may be easier for the voter to determine than specific issue positions because ideologies are relatively stable. Sometimes policy and ideology suggest different choices (for example, some affluent left-wingers might prefer conservatives on tax policy but prefer the left on certain social-ideological dimensions). This module enables scholars to ask how voters make these ideological, image, or policy-positional distinctions, how contextual conditions enhance the degree to and ease with which they can make each of these kinds of distinctions, and the relative weights of those different kinds of candidate or party distinctions in shaping vote behavior in those varying contexts.

Third, the module incorporates respondents' summary perceptions of their own political choices. Do they see differences between the parties? Do they like or dislike the options offered? Do they believe existing parties are able to deal with their sociotropic policy concerns? Do they believe, in the end, that the party choices on offer will generate meaningful policy differences?

The module also provides instrumentation to address the potential consequences of political choice sets of varying quality. What do voters do when the choice set does not allow for a choice that is compatible with their preferences or when the choices are indistinguishable, or distinguishable only at great cost or with great uncertainty? If elections increasingly fail to provide meaningful political choices for voters, does turnout decline (or its decline accelerate)? When all available choice options in an election are essentially indistinguishable from one another, why should people care about participating? Of course, the design explicitly invites consideration of macro-level consequences. New parties might enter the competitive arena to provide an electoral alternative. The decline of popular support for the existing democratic establishment may ultimately weaken electoral representation as the standard form of interest intermediation, and – depending on circumstances – might thereby foster a rise in societal disorder and strife or, even, threats to democracy itself. All of these concerns are perhaps more relevant than ever because traditional social cleavages no longer structure electoral choices as strongly as they used to do. New social divisions (or old divisions in new democracies) seem insufficiently salient to add meaning to the electoral choices of voters. As social cleavages become weaker structural bases for voters' electoral preferences, the parties that traditionally represented those social-groups become less clearly differentiated in voters' eyes and volatility in electoral support for parties correspondingly rises, as does the potential for emergence of protest and single-issue parties (Dalton and Wattenberg, 2000). In addition, some scholars worry that changes in the character of political campaigns (Farrell and Schmitt-Beck, 2002) may be undercutting the potential for parties to serve as the primary institutional mechanism for mobilization and conversion of the vote (Aarts, Blais, and Schmitt, 2008; McAllister,

2007).

Findings So Far

Scholars have used CSES data to develop and test new ideas about the effect of institutions on behaviour and policy. A bibliography of some of the works using CSES thus far is available at www.cses.org. Here we summarise the key findings so far published. This list of publications is made up of all those known by the end of 2008, but may not be entirely comprehensive.

Anderson (2006) used the data to demonstrate the extent to which multilevel governance weakens incentives for economic voting.

Anderson, Blais, Bowler, Donovan and Listhaug (2005) examine the effects of winning and losing on individuals' satisfaction with democracy, and find that partisanship and ideological commitments have effects only in certain circumstances, but where they do, they amplify rather than minimise satisfaction. Losers are less satisfied with democracy where it is weak, and where electoral rules produce disproportional outcomes.

Bernhagen and Marsh (2007) estimate the partisan effects of low voter turnout and provide simulations of election outcomes for incremental changes in turnout. Their findings suggest few systematic gains from increased turnout for left-of-centre parties, but small parties and non-incumbents would benefit if everybody voted.

Birch (2008) finds that proportional electoral systems and the public funding of parties have positive impacts on confidence about fairness in the conduct of elections, but the formal independence of electoral management bodies is negatively associated with this variable.

Blais and Bodet (2006) studied the effects of proportional representation (PR) on the congruence between the left/right positions of citizens and policymakers. In principle, more parties mean more choices. Theoretically, this suggests that PR, which favours multipartism, may tighten congruence, but they found empirically that this greater set of options is undercut. First, more parties also mean less centrist parties and more coalition governments, but then more coalitions also mean more centrist governments. In the end, then, they found that PR does not much affect citizen-policymaker congruence.

Brockington (2004) finds that coalitions that violate the minimal-winning rule depress turnout especially among supporters of major parties. But after accounting for variations in coalition governments, larger party systems appear to enhance rather than depress individuals' propensity to vote. There is limited evidence that this participation-enhancing role of larger party systems is not evenly distributed across the electorate. Those lacking a university degree may find the decision environment created by larger party systems more complex.

Chu and Hwang (2007) find that partisanship in East Asia exerts just as much influence

on citizens'engagement in politics as in established democracies.

Dalton and Weldon (2005) show that increasing distrust of parties decreases voting turnout, contributes to the fragmentation of contemporary party systems, and the electoral base of new protest parties, and stimulates broader cynicism towards government.

Dalton and Weldon (2007) compare party identification across old and new democracies and find that electoral experience and parental socialization are strong sources of partisanship, but the third-wave democracies also display evidence of latent socialization carried over from the old regime. Party identities are lower in new democracies, but can develop if the party system creates the conditions to develop these bonds.

Dalton and Tanaka (2007) examine the utility of the left-right scale across several East Asian nations, and find that it works as well as in Australia and New Zealand, representing old European democracies in the region. Voters are most polarized and governments more distant from voters in Japan and New Zealand, as compared to the East Asian new democracies.

Dalton (2004) finds that those who believe parties care what they think are more likely to participate in election campaigns, and that belief that elections are fair or unfair affects satisfaction with democracy, perceptions that politicians care, and of their ability to know what people think.

Enyedi and Tóka (2007) use descriptive statistics from the CSES 1 and CSES 2 studies to demonstrate that third-wave democracies have a slightly lower percentage of party identifier than older democracies.

Farrell and McAllister (2006) moved beyond the PR/plurality-majority distinction among electoral systems to examine the degree to which ballot structure incorporates ordinal or preferential features. Preferential voting, they found, increases voters' sense of fairness about election outcomes among citizens.

Fraile (2008) finds that political knowledge is important for effective retrospective assessment of government performance, while ideological voting is more apparent where levels of political knowledge are low.

Gronlund and Milner (2006) show that education explains a lot of what citizens know about politics. Contextualized analysis shows that the effect of education varies with the country's degree of economic redistribution. In more egalitarian countries, political knowledge is less contingent on education attained than in more inegalitarian countries. Similarly, education seems to have a stronger effect in countries with majoritarian electoral systems compared to countries with proportional systems.

Hellwig (2001) uses CSES 1 data from nine advanced industrial democracies to demonstrate that the effect of economic evaluations on voting support for the incumbents drops with the clarity of the national government's responsibility for economic outcomes.

The result holds not only with political indicators of accountability that follow previous research by Powell and Whitten, but also for trade openness. The negative effect of trade openness on economic voting is, however, restricted to non-union households, private sector workers, employees in the tertiary sector.

Holmberg (2003) shows the degree to which people are attached to a party is related to how they view the need for parties in their country. In countries with widely different democratic systems, people who identify strongly with a party tend to be much more supportive of the idea that parties are necessary to the functioning of the political system than people without strong party attachments.

Huber, Kernell, and Leoni (2005) showed that institutions that assist voters in retrospectively evaluating parties – specifically, strong party discipline and few parties in government – increase partisanship. These institutions matter most for those individuals with the fewest cognitive resources.

Karp and Banducci (2007) find that rates of reported party contact for the purpose of mobilizing voters are lower in new democracies and that on average citizens appear to be less engaged in the political process in those countries. Nevertheless, parties in new democracies appear to be more likely to target citizens than in old democracies. Their efforts lead them to be just as successful at stimulating political participation.

Karp and Banducci (2008b) that political efficacy is higher under PR than majoritarian systems, and argue that this explains higher turnout under PR systems.

Kedar (2005a, 2005b, 2005c) shows how the diffusion of power at the national level of government and across national and local levels affects voter choice, focusing especially on the ways citizens use the opportunities for horizontal and vertical *balancing* that political systems with more diffusion of authority offer to get the policy outcomes they value by voting for parties whose positions are more extreme than their own.

Klingemann (2009) edited a book drawing on module 1 of the CSES. Summarising the book's overall findings, and generalising further from one of Holmberg's chapter conclusions, he states 'institutions matter, but they do not matter much'. Nonetheless, if the effects are small, they are often substantive, as the various chapters indicate.

> Nevitte, Blais, and Gidengil, confirmed that turnout is negatively affected by disproportionality of seats to votes, but the higher the number of effective parties, the lower the turnout. Yet neither the electoral system nor party system fragmentation interact with social or demographic variables to affect turnout, except in the case of wealth (country-level) and income (individual-level): the wealthier a country, the less effect of income. After controlling for contextual factors, turnout is lower in new democracies than in old ones.
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> Banducci and Karp showed that political efficacy is higher under PR than majoritarian systems, and argue that this explains higher turnout under PR

systems. They directly estimate the effects of coalition government and show that, with the number of government parties as a control, the more actual parties in Parliament, the higher the turnout.

Schmidt examined multiple party identifications, and showed that, contrary to expectations, they are no more likely in PR than in plurality systems. They are instead a feature of new democracies, and are therefore expected to diminish as party systems consolidate.

Holmberg found that candidate recognition is higher in single-member plurality than in multiple-member PR systems, but that the difference is not nearly as great as expected.

Curtice and Shively showed that, against expectations, there are no differences in the perceived quality of legislative representation between multiple member PR and single-member plurality systems.

Nishizawa showed that evaluations of the economy attributed to government performance have stronger effects in parliamentary and plurality systems, and weaker effects under PR and Presidential systems.

Kroh showed that there is less ideological voting where party systems are complex. The more parties in Parliament, the lower the level of ideological voting, but more parties in government the greater the extent of ideological voting, even more so when parties are ideologically proximate.

Klingemann and Wessels reported that where electoral systems offer more than one vote, and these are translated into clear choices, voters focus on the most relevant criteria: a party, where the vote is for a list; a candidate, where the vote is for a candidate.

Toka investigated the conditions for instrumental and expressive voting. Contrary to expectations, instrumental voting is not higher under conditions of proportionality, and expressive voting is not enhanced by a greater number of political parties, nor in elections where national office is not at stake.

Gschwend confirmed that the lower the district magnitude, the higher the likelihood of strategic voting.

Listhaug, Aardah, and Ellis investigated the conditions for political support: political efficacy (voting makes a difference, who is in power makes a difference) and satisfaction with democracy. Contrary to expectations, voters with a concern for broad representation of group interests and policy preferences are not better represented in parliamentary systems, nor under PR. Neither do strong political rights and civil liberties appear to generate higher levels of political support.

> Thomassen and Van Der Kolk reported that satisfaction with democracy is higher in old democracies, and is more closely related to political effectiveness in those contexts.

Long, Jusko and Shively (2005) propose an innovation in statistical methodology and explore the power of their two-step strategy in supplementing or replacing multilevel analysis with the help of CSES data on how the effective number of parties and concurrent presidential elections influence the impact of information costs on voting.

McAllister (2008) edited a special issue of *Electoral Studies*. In it:

> Aarts and Thomassen find that satisfaction with democracy depends more on perceptions of representation than on perceptions of accountability, that the latter but not the former are enhanced by a proportional-type electoral system, and that overall satisfaction tends to be lower in PR systems as well as in new democracies.
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> Wessels and Schmitt argue that the meaningfulness of electoral choices is the result of political supply structure and the institutional setup. They show that issue (left/right) voting increases with the number of parties and the degree of polarization but decreases with the amount of party differentiation.
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> Toka tests the proposition that a better informed electorate helps to produce better governance. He examines the relationship between various indicators of good governance and measures of information effects in elections. He finds some significant correlations, though the effects only materializes over multiple elections and do not extend to all aspects of good governance.
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> Huang, Chang, and Chu look at the sources of democratic legitimacy and determine whether citizens' evaluations can be explained by three theoretical perspectives: modernization/postmodernization, institutionalism, and rationality. They conclude that rationality factors seem to be the most relevant with regards to general satisfaction with democracy but least important with respect to belief in the superiority of democracy.
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> Vowles seeks to determine whether globalization affects public perceptions of whether or not who is in power makes a difference. There appears to be some evidence of a correlation between international financial integration and pessimistic views but this is an artefact of a contingent association between powerful presidential systems and low levels of financial globalization. In the end, globalization does not seem to shape these citizen perceptions.
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> Ikeda, Kobayashi, and Hoshimoto examine the macro-environmental factors that affect cognitive consequences of political participation. They find that the positive impact of participation on feelings of political efficacy is stronger in

countries where the parties differ most ideologically and among individuals who have no party attachment and/or do not feel well represented by any party.

Fisher, Lessard-Philipps, Hobolt, and Curtice ask whether the plurality system discourages the less knowledgeable from voting. They do observe that those with low levels of political knowledge are particularly less likely to vote under the plurality rule. It is not clear why it is so, however. The authors show that this does not appear to be due to district competitiveness, mobilization, efficacy, or the size and polarization of the party system.

Karp and Banducci seek to ascertain whether the presence of women as candidates and office-holders stimulate political engagement among women. They find no such effect, though satisfaction with democracy and the perception that elections reflect the views of voters seems to be slightly enhanced by women's presence in parliament. The latter (weak) effect, however, is seen among both men and women.

McAllister and White (2007) find that social cleavages in the emerging democracies are similar to those of the established democracies, with religion and class predominating. Parties appear to be less effective in representing social cleavages in the emerging than in the established democracies.

McAllister (2007) finds that the four Lipset-Rokkan social cleavages are only loosely related to party support in the four East Asian nations, mainly through center-periphery and urban-rural divisions. The absence of an owner-worker cleavage is explained by the suppression of labour-based parties in these countries.

In a book focusing primarily on module 1 of the CSES, Norris (2004) contrasted rational choice institutionalist and modernization theories of political behaviour, confirming significant institutionalist effects on political behaviour. The extent to which party systems mobilize social cleavages may be stronger, or at least persist more strongly, under PR systems. Party identification and its effects of voters are also stronger. She found no evidence that consociational or consensus democracies were more effective in making ethnic minorities more satisfied with political processes. Systems of balloting based on candidates made voters more aware of the identities of candidates and legislators.

In another book, this time a study of right-wing parties, Norris (2005) confirmed that that party competition is more centrifugal under PR electoral systems and more centripetal under majoritarian systems, with combined electoral systems falling into the middle of the distribution. Political attitudes predicted support for the radical right far more strongly than social characteristics, although the latter probably has indirect effects, with leadership also having significant effects.

Sheng (2007) compares partisanship across East Asian nations, which is found to be

relatively weak compared with most Western democracies. More advanced democracies share a relatively uniform pattern across demographics, while young democracies in East Asia show a more skewed distribution of partisan identifiers, unevenly distributed across income and gender groups.

Tóka (2002) uses CSES data (as well as additional data from other surveys) to demonstrate that the level of issue voting is dependent on how clear and distinctive positions parties take on issues, that this effect remains significant after control for the age of democracy and the fragmentation of the party system, and is mediated by citizens' knowledge of the issue positions of parties.

Tóka (2003, 2004) uses multivariate simulations to determine whether differences in turnout and levels of political knowledge across politically relevant socio-demographic groups influence election outcomes in a systematic manner across 18 elections covered in the first release of the CSES data set. The analysis finds that turnout inequalities across social groups disadvantage left-wing parties to a certain extent, but not nearly as much as previous aggregate-level analysis suggested. Inequalities of political information levels, however, do not significantly suppress support for the left.

Wattenberg (2002) asked what low participation rates mean for democracy and used the CSES to place the United States in international context.

Zielinsk, Slomczynski, and Shabad (2005) examined democratic accountability in fluid party systems. They found that such accountability works through political parties, as it does in less fluid systems. But this accountability is undercut because legislators from governing parties often switch parties when their district's economy deteriorates. That increases their chances for re- election but means that elections have less ability to promote accountability.

Tables 1 and 2 summarise these publications by their dependent and main independent variables. The most popular dependent variables address aspects of government accountability, citizen engagement, and satisfaction with democracy. Among the independent variables, electoral system differences and contrasts between new and old democracies are those most employed, followed by political knowledge. The Figure shows that publications out of the CSES have been steadily increasing since the release of module 1.

With this platform of research findings to build upon, the question remains: to what new directions of inquiry should the CSES turn its attention? And what elements of its work so far should be continued, repeating the same instruments to make possible analysis over time?

New Directions?

Election Interpretation

Election interpretation is the 'conventional wisdom' or climate of opinion regarding the election, established in its aftermath. Election interpretations have two dimensions:

content interpretation ("what the elections were about") and decisiveness or mandate interpretation. How the election is interpreted or understood carries political advantage and is a major normative force in public opinion and in democratic politics: in terms of representation processes; legitimacy; deliberation between elections; and in the conduct of politics and policy implementation following the elections. There are many interesting and important research questions stemming from this research agenda, on the individual-level, system-level, and multi-level of analysis, considering election interpretation both as an independent and as a dependent variable (Shamir and Shamir 2008). To mention just a few: how are voters' vote considerations, priorities and vote choice related to election interpretations? When will individual vote considerations and election meaning converge and when diverge? How are different election interpretations related to electoral systems, coalition formation or coalition preferences, to turnout, political interest, confidence in democracy, on the system and on the individual-level? Are elections - and when are they - about the major social problems or cleavage dimensions of a society? What are the relationships between electoral systems and regime types and mandates, between electoral systems and the concentration or spread of interpretations, as well as specific content interpretations, such as leaders or issues? And finally, what is the relationship between political sophistication and meaning of election perceptions at the individual and system levels?

The Political Economy of Electoral Systems

In contrast to the relatively limited findings about institutional effects so far reported from much analysis of the CSES, research in comparative political economy has generated some striking theoretical claims about the effects of electoral institutions on the partisan composition of governments and consequently on social and economic policy.

As Iversen puts it:

> The fact that partisan politics is systematically biased to the left in some countries but to the right in others is not in any straightforward way related to the power of unions or the size of the traditional working class. For example, it is striking that the decline of the industrial working class and their unions have been associated with a rise, not a collapse, in political support for the welfare state. Also, countries with the most skewed distribution of income, where standard class arguments would predict the most radical redistribution, are in fact the least redistributive. The solution to the puzzles … is to be found in the interplay of insurance and redistributive incentives to support the welfare state, as well as the political institutions that translate these motives into policy (Iversen 2005, 6).

In particular, Iversen uses work on the economic effects of political institutions (Persson and Tabellini, 2003) to show that the extent of redistribution is closely related to the electoral system, and the presence or otherwise of responsible and programmatic parties. Iversen's underlying argument is that people's preferences for social protection are a function of their income and specificity of skills. But because current pivotal voters can only choose policies to benefit themselves in the future, and governments cannot be bound beyond a single term in office, this

creates a ‘time-inconsistency problem’ that leads to under-provision despite long-term voter preferences for more. Another problem compounds the situation, and it is particularly strong in majoritarian electoral systems. Party policy platforms represent core voters, but parties must appeal to those at the median. Yet it is middle-income median voters that are most concerned about what a party may do in government, and thus they may engage in strategic voting that leads to outcomes inconsistent with their preferences. Rather than allying with the poor to redistribute income away from the rich, they will ally with the rich even though they have interests in redistribution and social protection mechanisms that may not be met as a consequence. The result is that voters in majoritarian systems tend to support parties with strong leaders that do not commit to long-term investment in social protection, an incentive weaker under PR where it is less important for parties to win the support of the median voter. PR also gives centrist parties an incentive to ally with left parties and support redistribution that benefits both the poor and the middle class. In majoritarian systems, parties are less likely to deviate from their platforms, and therefore those who would have voted for centrist parties are more likely to support the right.

A CSES module that focused on this theoretical framework would collect a greater depth of background data on respondents’ skills and, in particular, their ability to flexibly adapt to changes in the economy. Attitudes to risk and perceptions of job security would also be relevant as, of course, would be opinions about redistribution of income, and the preferred extent of redistribution of income. But the key challenge will be to make a direct test of the proposition that, all relevant background variables controlled, middle income voters will vote for parties of the centre under PR and parties of the centre-right under SMP systems. This aspect of Iversen's argument seems the most problematic, given increasingly low levels of class voting in most advanced democracies. This potential direction of research also connects to the CSES's ongoing priority to investigate social cleavages and their political implications. Finally, the implications of these propositions for the development of public policy in new democracies could be developed with the potential for some original findings.

The Behavioural Foundations of Social Politics

Another variation in terms of a focus on the politics of the welfare state has been proposed. This asks: why do some governments spend more on social policies than others? This fundamental question can be addressed by investigating how parties and group-based identities affect voters understand the tradeoff between social insurance and redistribution. The dominant explanations for the size of the welfare state across countries assume that voters can clearly distinguish between the redistributive and insurance elements of public policy. Redistribution involves a transfer from the rich to the poor. Poor voters are expected to desire more redistribution than the rich. Insurance, on the other hand, involves inter-temporal risk sharing. The demand for social insurance is expected to increase with labor market risk and income. Though competing schools of thought on the political economy of the welfare state disagree on many things, they agree on these

fundamentals—the poor desire redistribution and the rich and at-risk desire insurance. Despite this consensus, we know very little about how citizens evaluate the redistributive and insurance elements of social policy in a world in which many policies combine elements of both.

Questions in module 4 of the CSES could address three interrelated issues bearing on the distinction between redistribution and social insurance: first, do voters understand the distinction between redistribution and social insurance? If voters cannot, the behavioral underpinnings of a generation's work on the welfare state are subject to question. Second, how does the means by which parties deliver redistribution and insurance condition voter preferences over these two forms of government spending? Where parties deliver these goods programmatically, they might help voters solve any information problems they have in distinguishing redistribution from insurance, but the current literature yields virtually no insight on how the presence of clientelistic networks may affect people's preferences over redistribution and social insurance. Third, how do voters' religious, ethnic and racial identities influence their preferences for redistribution and insurance? The literature on identity and government spending is premised on the notion that social spending is redistributive, i.e. that it goes to the poor. Yet much social spending is in the form of insurance. That the case, if group income impacts the preferences of group members over social insurance, members of rich groups might prefer more social spending rather than less.

Addressing these questions in module 4 of the CSES would allow us to examine the behavioural underpinnings of considerable recent research in political economy while also addressing crucial pending issues in the literatures on parties, clientelism, and individual preferences for redistribution.

The Electoral Implications of Coalitions

The standard approach in the voting literature is to construe the vote decision as one in which the choice is between a number of parties, and the voter's task is to determine which party she prefers. The challenge is then to examine how voters form preferences about the parties. In some models it is assumed that voters choose on the basis of issues; they support the party that is least distant from their own positions (the proximity model) or most clearly on their side (the directional model). In other models, it is assumed that voters support the party that they perceive to be the most competent to deal with the issues they deem to be the most important (the valence model).

The focus on the parties has been questioned recently. Some research has examined the "personal" vote that individual local candidates or party leaders are able to garner. And a number of studies have shown that people do not necessarily vote for the party that they prefer, as they also factor in their viability, their capacity to win seats.

A recent stream of research contends that elections are ultimately about who will

form the government, and that in many cases the government is made of a coalition of parties. Furthermore, the set of options that voters are offered on election day is sometime the outcome of pre-electoral coalitions made by the parties. Thus the questions: Do people have views about these pre-electoral or potential post-electoral coalitions? How are these views formed? Do they affect the final vote choice and the outcomes of elections?

We already have some evidence that people have consistent preferences and expectations about potential government coalitions and that these perceptions and evaluations affect vote choice, at least in countries such as Netherlands, Israel, Germany, and New Zealand. There is also evidence that people have views about pre-electoral coalitions and that these may influence their vote decision. This research is country-specific. The CSES would provide a golden opportunity to examine more systematically whether people have views about the coalitions that have been or could be formed, how these views are formed, and how they influence vote choice.

The fact is that in many countries voters have to choose not only among parties but also among coalitions of them, that in many other cases the outcome of the election will be the formation of a government coalition, and that the role of coalitions depends to a great extent on electoral institutions (a clear focus of CSES). It would make sense to include a small battery of questions on this theme.

Professionalisation of Political Campaigning
This proposal would examine the changing nature of political campaigning and particularly its professionalisation. It would measure the use of the new tools and techniques associated with this shift in the first instance, but also on the likely consequences of this new form of voter outreach. The key question that seems to arise in the literature is whether new styles of more 'hi-tech' modes of campaigning are alienating voters by depersonalising contact and narrowing parties' grassroots, by reducing their need for campaign workers. CSES module questions would mainly focus on party contacts with voters and their nature. Institutional differences are likely to shape some of these differences, with different incentives associated with mobilization efforts, variation in competitiveness, media systems, and the funding of political parties.

Political Knowledge
Modules 1-3 of the CSES have incorporated three political knowledge questions. Collaborators have been asked to choose questions that generate correct responses of a third, a half, and two thirds, thus generating a scale of relative knowledge with approximately the same mean and standard deviation for each country/election. However, there is no stipulation of any content for these questions. An alternative proposal from Henry Milner has been to construct three or four questions sufficiently generic to be asked in all countries. Such questions and a rationale for them will almost certainly be put before the Module 4 Planning Committee in an effort to demonstrate that contextual differences between countries do not make such standardization pointless.

Without at this point, looking at specific wording, there may be a middle position to be explored. A statistical distribution without stipulation of content lacks any theoretical justification, yet a huge literature about political knowledge suggests there should be some relevant parameters. Accountability is one of the major themes of the CSES: if so, we should ask whether voters or not can clearly identify who is accountable, namely, the incumbent party or parties. Membership of the political community could be another relevant variable: who can vote? Orientation to international politics could be another relevant dimension: for example, who can identify five members of the UN Security Council? Finally, through a further development of the 'issue' questions, one could try to estimate the extent to which respondent's perceptions of the key issues being debated compare to those issues actually being debated during the election campaign. Such questions would need to vary between countries to capture specifics of national context, but could provide much more theoretically meaningful data about political knowledge. Users wanting a standardized scale could simply standardize the responses by country/election.

Conclusion

The quality and relevance of these six proposals bode well for the future of the CSES and its potential to generate significant new knowledge. The Task Force makes no recommendation about their relative merits. That is a matter for the new Planning Committee in consultation with collaborators. But it may be helpful for us to draw attention to some more general matters for debate. Should module 4 be based on one ‘big idea’ or draw selectively from several? Some of the proposals above might require a large part of the module. Others might require only a handful of questions. And, finally, how much continuity is desirable in themes and instruments? Review of the findings summarized above, in the light of the proposals for the future, should go some way towards providing answers to this question.

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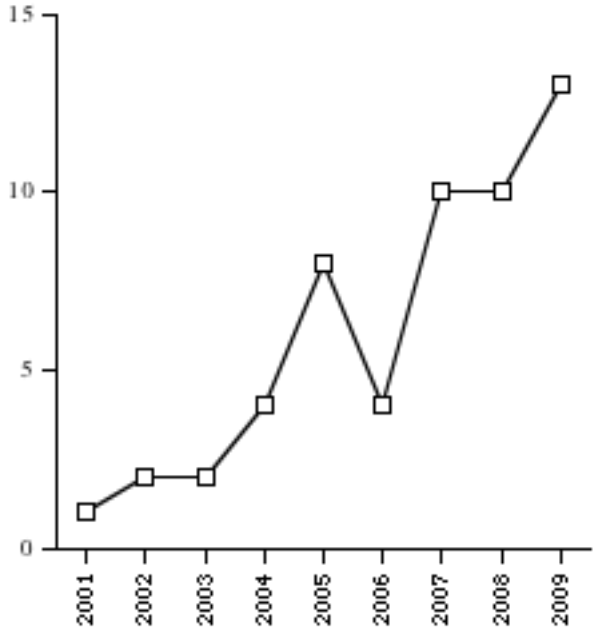

NOTE: 2008 and 2009 data do not include publications in press or likely to be published in 2009

Table 1: CSES Publications by Dependent Variables

Economic Voting	Satisfaction with democracy	Turnout	Fairness	Mass-Elite Policy Congruence	Citizen Engagement/ Efficacy	Party Systems/ Cleavages	Protest Parties/Radical Right	System Support	Party Identification	Ideology/Issue Voting	Government Accountability	Political Knowledge	Choice parameters
3	6	4	2	1	7	4	2	4	5	4	9	1	7
Anderson (2006)	Anderson, Blais, Bowler, Donovan and Listhaug (2005)	Brockington (2004)	Birch (2008)	Blais and Bodet (2006)	Chu and Hwang (2007)	Dalton and Weldon (2005)	Dalton and Weldon (2005)	Dalton and Weldon (2005)	Dalton and Weldon (2007)	Dalton and Tanaka (2007)	Fraile (2008)	Gronlund and Milner (2006)	Klingemann and Wessels (2009)
Hellwig (2001)	Dalton (2004)	Dalton and Weldon (2005)	Farrell and McAllister (2006)		Dalton (2004)	McAllister and White (2007)	Norris (2005)	Dalton (2004)	Enyedi and Tóka (2007)	Fraile (2008)	Huber, Kernell, and Leoni (2005)		Toka (2009)
Nishizawa (2009)	Thomassen and Van Der Kolk (2009)	Nevitte, Blais, and Gidengil (2009)			Karp and Banducci (2007)	McAllister (2007)		Holmberg (2003)	Schmidt (2009)	Kroh (2009)	Kedar (2005a, 2005b, 2005c)		Gschwend (2009)
	Aarts and Thomassen (2008)	Fisher, Lessard-Philipps, Hobolt, and Curtice (2008)			Banducci and Karp 2009	Norris (2004)		Listhaug, Aardah, and Ellis (2009)	Norris (2004)	Tóka (2002)	Holmberg (2009)		Long, Jusko and Shively (2005)
	Huang, Chang, and Chu (2008)	Tóka (2003, 2004)			Ikeda, Kobayashi, and Hoshimoto (2008)				Sheng (2007)		Curtice and Shively (2009)		Wessels and Schmitt (2008)
	Norris (2004)				Karp and Banducci (2008)						Toka (2008)		Kedar (2005a, 2005b, 2005c)
					Wattenberg (2002)						Vowles (2008)		Bernhagen and Marsh (2007)
											Norris (2004) Zielinsk, Slomczynski, and Shabad (2005)		

Table 2: CSES Publications by Main Independent Variables

Divided Government	Winning/Losing/ Participation	Turnout	Electoral System	Coalitions	New/Old Democracies	Evaluations of Parties	Political Knowledge	Globalization	Social Background	Presidential/ Parliamentary	Ballot Structure	Party Sytems	Gender
2	2	3	17	3	10	3	4	2	2	2	3		1
Anderson (2006)	Anderson, Blais, Bowler, Donovan and Listhaug (2005)	Bernhagen and Marsh (2007)	Birch (2008)	Brockington (2004)	Chu and Hwang (2007)	Dalton and Weldon (2005)	Fraile (2008)	Hellwig (2001)	Gronlund and Milner (2006)	Nishizawa (2009)	Klingemann and Wessels (2009)		Karp and Banducci (2008a)
Kedar (2005a, 2005b, 2005c)	Ikeda, Kobayashi, and Hoshimoto (2008)	Tóka (2003, 2004)	Blais and Bodet (2006)	Huber, Kernell, and Leoni (2005)	Dalton and Weldon (2007)	Dalton (2004)	Toka (2008)	Vowles (2008)	Nevitte, Blais, and Gidengil (2009)	Long, Jusko and Shively (2005)	Farrell and McAllister (2006)	Wessels and Schmitt (2008)	
		Wattenberg (2002)	Gronlund and Milner (2006)	Kroh (2009)	Dalton and Tanaka (2007)	Holmberg (2003)	Fisher, Lessard-Philipps, Hobolt, and Curtice (2008)				Norris (2004)	Zielinsk, Slomczynski, and Shabad (2005)	
			Kedar (2005a, 2005b, 2005c)		Enyedi and Tóka (2007)		Tóka (2002)						
			Nevitte, Blais, and Gidengil (2009)		Karp and Banducci (2007)		Tóka (2003, 2004)						
			Banducci and Karp (2008, 2009)		Thomassen and Van Der Kolk (2009)								
			Schmidt (2009)		Huang, Chang, and Chu (2008)								
			Holmberg (2009)		McAllister and White (2007)								
			Curtice and Shively (2009)		McAllister (2007)								
			Nishizawa (2009)		Sheng (2007)								
			Toka (2009)										
			Gschwend (2009)										
			Listhaug, Aardah, and Ellis (2009)										
			Aarts and Thomassen (2008)										
			Fisher, Lessard-Philipps, Hobolt, and Curtice (2008)										
			Norris (2004)										
			Norris (2005)										